



20958/C



XXIV. *An Account of some recent Discoveries at Holwood-hill, in Kent, by A. J. KEMPE, Esq. F. S. A. in a Letter addressed to NICHOLAS CARLISLE, Esq. F. R. S. Secretary.*

Read 27th November 1828.

Rodney Buildings, New Kent Road, Nov. 26, 1828.

DEAR SIR,

ABOUT fifteen years since I was resident in the neighbourhood of Cæsar's Camp, Holwood-hill, in Kent, of which a Plan is engraved in the fourth Volume of the *Vetusta Monumenta* of the Society of Antiquaries. I had then the opportunity of making some observations in the vicinity of those remains which have ultimately led to the discoveries which form the subject of this communication.

The bold entrenchments at Holwood occupy a very elevated site^a on the northern side of the hill, and command a great extent of country towards the North, East, and West. I have little doubt of their being a Roman work, for they follow the usual mode of Roman castrametation, as far as the irregular nature of the ground has permitted, oblong, with rounded angles.

The old road to Westerham, ran formerly through the centre of the Camp, but was turned by the late Right Hon. William Pitt, when he planted and improved the grounds at Holwood. It now passes the spring-head of the little river Ravensbourne, which supplied the garrison

^a John Ward, Esq. of Holwood-house, caused the elevation of the spot to be accurately taken, and found it to correspond with the top of James's tower on the well-known eminence of Shooter's-hill.



with water of the purest quality,^b and closely following the external line of the fence of Holwood-park, crosses over the crest of the hill, and making a small bend to the eastward, at length declines with the eminence itself towards the south.

A short distance beyond the 14th mile stone on this bend of the road, is another spring of water, which rises just within the paling of Holwood-park, runs under the road, and supplies a little cistern on the opposite side.^c Close to this cistern is a gate, leading to a bold precipitous declivity bearing the singular name of *War-bank*. At the lower part of this eminence I had the good fortune to observe a mound about thirty yards in length, in which was an oblong cavity overgrown with bushes, and the sides of which, on close examination, I found to be composed of flints and regular layers of Roman tile. On inquiry, I was informed that a stone Coffin had been taken, about thirty years before, from this place, and that another was still remaining in the ground a few paces distant; also, that in forming a ditch close by, many Coins, a Dagger, Spur, Key, an earthen vessel of coarse manufacture, and several large nails had been found. Some of these articles are now in my possession. The coffin is that with the entablature numbered 2, in Pl. XXXII. I traced it to the manor-house of West Wickham, where it now lies in the garden in a fractured and neglected condition. I made at the time a few notes of these matters, which I communicated to a friend, the editor of a periodical publication^d of the day, who inserted

^b A little above this spring, and on the open heath, I observe an Earth-work of some strength with a foss on the southern side twenty-four feet in width, measuring from the top of the vallum to the opposite side. This runs across Keston Common from east to west, and seems to have been intended to protect the spring. A natural ravine, meeting this trench at right angles, forms a defence on the western side. The formation of the new line of road has destroyed the work on the eastern, where its termination cannot consequently be discovered. It may perhaps be of British origin, anterior to the construction of the adjoining camp by the Romans.

^c See the Plan, Pl. XXXI.

^d The Military Register, by Robert Scott, Esq.

them in his work; they were afterwards copied into a small topographical account of the town of Bromley and its environs.^e I mention this circumstance by no means to call your attention, or that of the Society, to my little Tract, but merely as the casual sight of it had the good fortune to stimulate one of its ingenious and zealous members, Thomas Crofton Croker, Esq. to make a research on the spot, which produced a very satisfactory result. Having obtained the permission of the dowager Lady Farnaby, of Wickham Court, the proprietor of the soil, to make an excavation, he with much liberality and politeness invited me to be present. Mr. Croker commenced his operations at War-bank on the 17th of September last, and in a short time discovered the foundations of the circular building represented in the Plate, proceeded to define its exterior form, partly cleared the adjoining tomb (the oblong cavity before-mentioned) and uncovered the massive sarcophagus which still remains north of this sepulchre, in a grave 8 feet deep, cut in the solid chalk rock. And here it is but due to Mr. Croker to observe, that it did not suit his convenience to afford more time to the investigation of these antiquities, or, I feel well assured, there could have been little room or occasion for me to have followed up the search. I believe he will favour the Society with an account of his operations at War-bank, and a view of the articles which he found.

Mr. Croker's excavation was continued for two days; the ground was then filled in, and the whole surface restored to its former level.

It appeared to me a very desirable object that a section should be made across the circular building, the contents of which Mr. Croker had not had time to ascertain, and that the depth of the foundations and nature of the surrounding soil, some feet below the surface, should be explored.

Having obtained, through the medium of your application to the Rev. Sir Charles Farnaby, bart., permission to re-commence the excavations,

^e Outlines of the History and Antiquities of Bromley in Kent, by John Dunkin. Bromley, 1815.

on the morning of the 8th of October, I began by directing three labourers to cut a section from west to east across the circular building. At the depth of five feet on the eastern interior side, I came to the foundations resting on the natural chalk, and found, to my disappointment, whatever floor the building might have had, no vestige of it now existed, and that nothing decisive could be inferred from this opening, relative to the original appropriation of the edifice. A small fragment of pottery, a few minute portions of charcoal, and a stone of the grit^f kind, full of small shells, were all that I found in this section. These had in all probability been fortuitously thrown in, when the ruins of the building had been at some former period covered over in order to bring the neighbouring soil into cultivation. There are, however, some circumstances in the construction of this circular edifice well worthy of observation: its walls are a yard in breadth, their exterior circumference 90 feet: they were built of flint (a material plentiful about the spot), and bonded for the greater part of their circuit with a double course of Roman brick: the outer surface of the wall, where it rose from the original level of the soil, at about 2 feet 9 inches from the foundation, was covered with a coat of the cement, called by Vitruvius^g *arenatum*, composed in this instance of an admixture of lime, with the gravel of the neighbouring soil, and coarse fragments of broken tile. On this was laid a coat of stucco, composed of lime and tile more minutely broken. The surface of the latter being rendered very smooth, was lastly covered with a dark red pigment very carefully laid on. The projections of the building were covered in a similar manner to the main wall. It will be observed, that this colour, of whatever substance composed, must have been of a very permanent description, to

^f This fragment exactly corresponded with the kind of stone of which the chest, fig. 1, in Pl. XXXII. is composed.

^g Vitruvius gives particular directions for making this stucco; he describes the tile as being broken up with a hatchet. Should we not in the account of the Roman Bath near Stoke (*Archæologia*, vol. XXII. p. 31.) read *pounded* brick, for powdered brick,—meaning brick minutely broken, not brick reduced to powder?

have withstood, when the edifice was entire, the action of the solar heat and the washings of the rain, and, since its demolition, the damp of the soil, during so many ages. I imagine the pigment to be a sort of red ochre, and can hardly conceive that it could have remained so perfect in such a situation without an admixture of oil.

From the projections of this building were taken some very large and compact tiles turned up at the edges. These were of the sort, in their original application, laid on roofs, lapping one over the other, the ridge formed by their united edges being covered by a semicircular tile, of which I also found specimens in War-bank field.^h Vitruvius expressly recommends the use of old roof tiles in the construction of walls.ⁱ One of the tiles from this edifice has the impression apparently of a dog's feet. The impressions of the feet of animals (calves and sheep) on Roman tiles are mentioned in the 8th Volume of the *Archæologia*.^j Some singular marks resembling a modern writing character were observed on a tile from Reculver, in Kent.^k A tile from the Roman villa at Stoke is represented in the portion of the *Archæologia* recently published, as bearing the impression of dogs' feet.^l One might almost be induced to suppose that these strange impresses were affixed by the makers of the tiles for the purpose of puzzling and surprising future generations. I am aware that it may be said, animals had passed accidentally over these tiles, when laid out to dry previously to baking.^m

To return to my description of the ruins, from which I have digressed. North of the circular building, I uncovered the walls of the square one, which was undoubtedly a tomb, as it formerly contained

^h A perfect idea of the method of employing these tiles will be obtained by referring to the engraving of a Roman Sepulchre discovered at York, *Archæologia*, vol. II. p. 177.

ⁱ *Maximè ex veteribus tegulis tecti, structi parietes firmitatem poterunt habere.* Lib. ii. cap. 4.

^j Account of the villa at Mansfield, Woodhouse. *Archæolog.* vol. VIII. p. 363.

^k *Archæologia*, vol. VIII. p. 80.

^l *Ibid.* vol. XXII. Plate I. p. 32.

^m Some of the semi-circular marks on Roman tiles appear to have been made with the fingers.

the coffin, Fig. 2. before-mentioned. The walls of this building were bonded with a double course of roof tiles, much bowed in form, or perhaps warped in the baking. These were neither so large nor so compact as those from the round structure. See the sketch where the different kinds are represented lying in the fore-ground.

To the northward of this sepulchre is the grave, which contains the massive stone sarcophagus uncovered by Mr. Croker, Pl. XXXII. fig. 1. The form of this chest is an oblong square, it has a heavy coped lid, and its sides are four inches thick. I am told that it was originally covered with a coarse cement which thus hermetically sealed it in the grave. Ranging in a line with this, was another grave in the chalk, emptied of its original contents, but found by Mr. Croker to be full of broken fragments of ancient pottery of various and singular composition, some apparently for culinary uses.^a

On the eastern side of the circular structure I discovered a narrow opening, undoubtedly the door; and, on digging on this side of the foundations, I found some fragments of pottery ornamented with an elegant scroll pattern in which the head of an animal formed the connecting links,^o many pieces of urns baked and unbaked, and ashes from which I took portions of human teeth which had escaped the destruction of the funeral pile. An urn was here discovered under a bush, in the midst of the ashes contained in which was a brass ear-ring scored with indented lines like a graduated scale; also a minute portion of some other ornament of brass, impressed with a pattern of small circles. Near these relics were likewise found the horn of a young

^a Some of the fragments of pottery found at War-bank were of the finest texture minutely and elegantly ornamented. The interior of some of the vessels had been studded with pebbles from the gravel, not bigger than mustard seed, in imitation, I suppose, of mosaic work. Some of the coarser red pottery was compounded of clay mixed with broken oyster-shells. Some large fragments were found of urns rudely made of unbaked clay, without the assistance of the lathe, and decorated with a running cord-like ornament pinched up with the fingers, as modern housewives form the edge of a pie-crust. Mr. Croker has a large collection of these fragments, and will, I believe, lay drawings of them before the Society.

^o Pl. XXXII.

deer, deeply notched with some sharp weapon,^p and a rudely fashioned silver instrument, which appears to be a clumsy kind of stylus, the flat end for large erasures on the tablets of wax, the acute cut at one of its angles, for smaller. This instrument may have been longer. Some circular pieces of coarse grey pottery, of the size of a crown piece, and having a hole in the centre, were found; whether amulets, toys, tickets, or for what other use I shall not pretend to determine. It has constantly been the current tradition of the neighbourhood, that about this spot was a large town, and vulgar report frequently combining the grossest anachronisms with matters of fact, talks much of the extent of its buildings, and says that it contained some sixteen *public-houses*; not willing to have the ancient town unfurnished with a matter of such indispensable comfort to the commonalty of modern days.^q

I have always indeed suspected that this beautiful little valley, southwest of Holwood-hill, was the site of a Roman colony, and that the entrenchments on the northern side of that eminence might be the *castrum æstivum*, and retiring citadel of the Roman forces stationed here. The cultivators of Keston-court farm had uniformly asserted the existence of old foundations, scattered over the whole extent of War-bank field, and the two fields contiguous on either hand. I had the opportunity of confirming these reports and my own conjectures. The field being under plough during the latter days of my being engaged with my workmen about the ruins, I got the plough-man to insert the share somewhat deeply in the soil, and masses of ruinous walls were soon detected. These foundations are noticed in the Plan, Pl. XXXI. On digging in these places I found *tesseræ*, bones, teeth of animals, portions of charcoal, tiles,^r nails, the tongue of a fibula, and lastly, near the hedge, the foundation wall of a Roman building, two feet and a half in breadth, and

^p Is it too much to suppose that this was the result of a missing blow from the *victimarius*, who sometimes, Montfaucon tells us, used the axe instead of the *malleus*? He also says “*Dianæ cervi immolabantur.*” Montfaucon, tome ii. partie 1. 168, 198.

^q Mr. Croker's Notes say that tradition has handed down the name of this Town or City, and that it was called *Beaverston*, or *Plaxton*.

^r Some marked thus, X, but whether ornamentally or for *Legio Decima*, I will not presume.

thirty feet long, with two projecting walls, about a foot asunder, on the north side, (probably the walls of a flue,) which ran under the hedge. I could not pursue this very interesting part of my inquiry as far as I wished, as the field was sowed for a crop of wheat as soon as ploughed. I tried to take up the foundations on the other side of the hedge, but unassisted by the plough could not succeed. Many fragments of red pottery were, however, thrown up on the spot where I dug.

The site of the *Noviomagus* of Antonine, or *Noiomagus* of the Greek Geographer, Ptolemy, has long been an undecided point among antiquaries, although many high authorities concur in placing it near *Holwood-hill*. Camden assigned its situation at *Woodcote*, near *Croydon*, in *Surrey*, which very ill agrees with its distance from *Vagniacæ*, or *Maidstone*, as marked by the Imperial Itinerary, which stands thus,

A *Londinio*

Noviomagum, M. P. x.

Vagniacim, M. P. xviii.

Now the miles of the Itinerary are supposed, by good authority, to be horizontally^s measured from place to place, without allowing for the inequalities of surface. On applying the compasses to the Ordnance Map of Kent according to the scale, and measuring from the south side of London Bridge in the direction of *Holwood*, ten miles, we shall find the point of the compass touch precisely on the spot where *War-bank* field is, measuring from thence in the same manner eighteen miles, the point falls at *Maidstone*.^t The vestiges of a Roman colony in *War-bank* and the neighbouring fields, being I think most decided, and the distances, as have been shown, so well corresponding with those of the Itinerary, the site of *Noviomagus*, as far as the strongest probability can weigh, may be assigned to this place.

The coarse sun-baked clay of the aboriginal inhabitants being found

^s See Observations on the Itinerary of Antoninus in Horsley's *Britannia Romana*.

^t In the direction of this line between *Holwood-hill* and *Maidstone*, another Roman fortification occurs at *Old Borough Hill* in the parish of *Ightham*. See the Ordnance Map of Kent.

at the same time, and in considerable quantity, with the more perfectly manufactured Roman ware, may afford also the probable inference that the Britons had a settlement on the spot before the founding of Noiomagus, otherwise Noviomagus; the first syllables of which name would designate it as *neos*, *novus*, or *new*, in contradistinction to the more ancient British town.

Something now remains to be said on the nature of the buildings remaining in War-bank field. On comparing the relative proportions of the smaller oblong edifice with the circular one, we should be disposed to consider the latter rather a Temple than a Tomb. Some of the ancient temples were very small, and in the 662d year of the Roman Capital, the Temple of Feretrian Jupiter^u is said to have been but 15 feet in length. The diameter of the building at War-bank is 30 feet, a size apparently fully sufficient for a temple in a remote and newly founded colony of the Empire. Besides, the ancients are known to have had their *Ædiculæ* and *Sacella* for sacred purposes. The projections of this building, placed at unequal distances, are very bold, and look indeed like the plinths of columns. One coincidence attached to this edifice is very remarkable. The learned author of the *Antiquities of Greece* says, "that the way of building temples towards the east so that the doors being opened should receive the rising sun, was very ancient, and in latter ages almost universal."^v Now the small door of the building at Keston lies precisely *East*. Its principal front was towards the West, where the projecting plinths, if I may so term them, are placed closer. The ruins in the field show that this edifice must have been viewed from the domestic buildings in that direction,^w and, if the line of the foundations of these be ideally extended, the circular building will be found terminating that line as

^u See a dissertation on the Temples of the Ancients in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxix. p. 306, where Pliny is quoted for this assertion.

^v Potter's *Antiquities of Greece*, vol. i. p. 189.

^w These tombs therefore lay east of the buildings; the sepulchres were found only on the east side of Pompeii. Vide Gell's *Pompeiana*, p. 95.

if it had stood at the end of a street. The building at War-bank may have combined the double purpose of a temple and a tomb: frequently a temple hallowed the spot where the remains of the illustrious dead were deposited.* The horns and teeth of animals found about the building at War-bank, are plain indications that sacrifices had been performed there. This fact alone would not, I allow, be a decisive proof that the circular building was a temple,^y not a tomb. Sacrifices at the tombs of the departed seem to have been the marks of a pious respect. Thus Virgil tells us of the sacrifice that Æneas made at the tomb of his father:

“—Cædit quinas de more bidentes,
Totque sues, totidem nigrantes terga juvencos :
Vinaque fundebat pateris, animamque vocabat
Anchisæ magni, manesque Acheronte remissos.

Æn. lib. 5.

Although we find bodies inclosed in coffins at War-bank, we can draw no conclusion from that circumstance that they were placed there at a very late period of the Roman Empire. Montfaucon gives a representation of a sepulchral monument for Caius Lutatius Catulus, who flourished during the first Punic War, bearing a similar ornament round the inscription to that on the War-bank coffin, Pl. XXXII. fig. 2.^z No inscription appears on the latter, but it was evidently designed for one. Some doubt seems to exist about the age of the sarcophagus of Catulus; but, if his tomb had been renewed in later times, it may fairly be concluded he was originally buried in a chest. It is besides a received fact, that the sepulture of the whole body was used by the ancients as well as cre-

* Gell's Pompeiana, p. 89.

^y Mr. Croker has a beautiful fragment of stucco, most probably from the interior of this building. It is no doubt analogous to that sort called *marmoratum* by Vitruvius, but composed, as the material was at hand, of the stalactitical concretions of the chalk: It is painted in brilliant colours, with a pattern of interlacing circles, and forms resembling armorial shields.

^z Montfaucon *Antiquité Expliquée*, tome v. p. 108.

mation.^a In Gibson's edition of Camden's *Britannia*, an inscription of the time of Antoninus Pius is ornamented in a similar manner to the coffin, N^o 2 of my sketch. An altar in Horsley's *Britannia Romana*, dedicated to the Emperor Ælius, has the same entablature. A coin in my possession found at War-bank, appears to be of the Emperor Hadrian. The ornaments on some of the pottery are of the best taste. Considering all the indications which I have been able to obtain, I should not think some of the more important of the vestiges at War-bank of a later date than the second century of the Christian æra. Some may be still earlier. The massive plain sarcophagus had a very antique and imposing appearance. It was simply an oblong square stone chest. The chest Pl. XXXII. fig. 2, (whatever may be said of its ornament,) partook more of the appearance of the stone coffins of a later day; the sides were much thinner than those of fig 1, and they narrowed towards the feet.

These sepulchral deposits are perhaps of different periods, and the spot round the circular building (I had nearly said temple) at War-bank had probably long been the burying place of the Britons and their conquerors.

I believe I mentioned, in the early part of this Paper, the great number of large nails which were found in forming the dry ditch eastward of the buildings. These, with the stone coffins and urns, so remarkably agree with an account given by the venerable antiquary and historian Stow, of the discovery in his day of a Roman burial place in the open fields north-east of London,^b that I cannot but insert some extracts in this place. "On the east side of this church-yard (Saint Mary Spittle), lyeth a field, of old time called Lolesworth now Spittle-field, which about the year 1576 was broken up for clay to make bricks, in the digging thereof, many earthen pots called urnæ were found full of ashes and burnt bones of men, to wit, of the Romans that inhabited

^a Vide Kennett's *Antiquities of Rome*, p. 334, and the authorities quoted by him in proof of this assertion.

^b Here again are the sepulchres to the eastward of the town, see a preceding note.

here. Every one of these pots had in them (with the ashes of the dead) one piece of copper money with the inscription of the Emperor then reigning; some of them were of Claudius, some of Vespasian, some of Nero, of Anthonius Pius, of Trajanus, and others." He then goes on to relate the finding of vessels of white earth, lachrymatories, lamps, "dishes and cups of a fine red-coloured earth, which showed outwardly such a shining smoothnesse as if they had beene of curral (coral), those had in the bottomes Romane letters printed, &c." these were of course of the well known Samian ware. He proceeds, "there hath been found in the same field divers *coffins of stone* containing the bones of men." "Moreover there were also found the sculs and bones of men without coffins, or rather whose coffins (being of great timber) were consumed. Divers great nayles of iron were there found, such as are used in the wheels of shod carts, being each of them as big as a man's finger, and a quarter of a yard long. I there beheld the bones of a man, lying as I noted, the head north and the feet south,^c and round about him as thwart his head, and along his sides and thwart his feet, such nayles were found. Of these nayles (with the wood under the head thereof) I reserved one which I have yet to shew, but the nayle lying dry is by scaling greatly wasted."^d

In conclusion something may be briefly observed in the singular appellation which this place bears, *War-bank*,^e seeming to denote some scathe or havock done within its limits. I have remarked that two or three fields about the spot are full of the *vestigia* of human residence,

^c The bodies at War-bank lay north and south. See the plan. The head being placed north, the faces were towards the building which I have conjectured to be for sacred purposes. Nails are constantly found in Roman places of interment. Some were brought me with an urn, by the late C. A. Stothard, F. S. A. from Colchester. None that I have seen, however, equal Stowe's in size: they must, like the nail he preserved, be in these later days indeed "much wasted."

^d Stowe's Survey, edit. 1598, p. 324.

^e Wæp Banc, Saxon. See Bailey's Dictionary on the words War and Bank. Near the Roman Camp at Walton on Thames, is a field called War-close.—Manning and Bray's Surrey.

tiles, scored bricks, pottery, the bones of men and animals. On one of the fragments of human bone, picked up at the ruins near the hedge, I observed a deep cut which must have been inflicted by some sharp instrument. It may be no violent stretch of fancy to suppose that the town here, abandoned by the Romans, was destroyed in the wars between the Saxons and Britons, and that in the name War-bank, or the Hill of Battle, we have the brief record of a sanguinary conflict. Finally, to this mysterious spot, over the history of which, Time has drawn his obscure if not impenetrable veil, the beautiful lines of the Mantuan Poet may not unaptly be applied.

“Scilicet et tempus veniet cum finibus illis

Agricola, incurvo terram molitus aratro,

Exesa inveniet scabrâ rubigine pila,

Aut gravibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanes,

Grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulchris.

Georgica, Lib. 1.

I beg to subscribe myself, dear Sir, with much respect,

Your very obedient and faithful servant,

ALFRED JOHN KEMPE.

To Nicholas Carlisle, Esq.

&c. &c. &c.

P. S. I beg to add that at the termination of my three weeks labour at War-bank, I obtained permission from the tenant of Keston-court farm, to leave the larger building a few inches above ground for the gratification of any of the members of the Society who might desire to visit the spot. I much fear that the flint and Roman tiles which compose the walls, may ere long offer a powerful motive for their destruction. I have, however, addressed a letter to the Rev. Sir Charles Farnaby, entreating his protection for these curious remains, which I hope they may obtain.



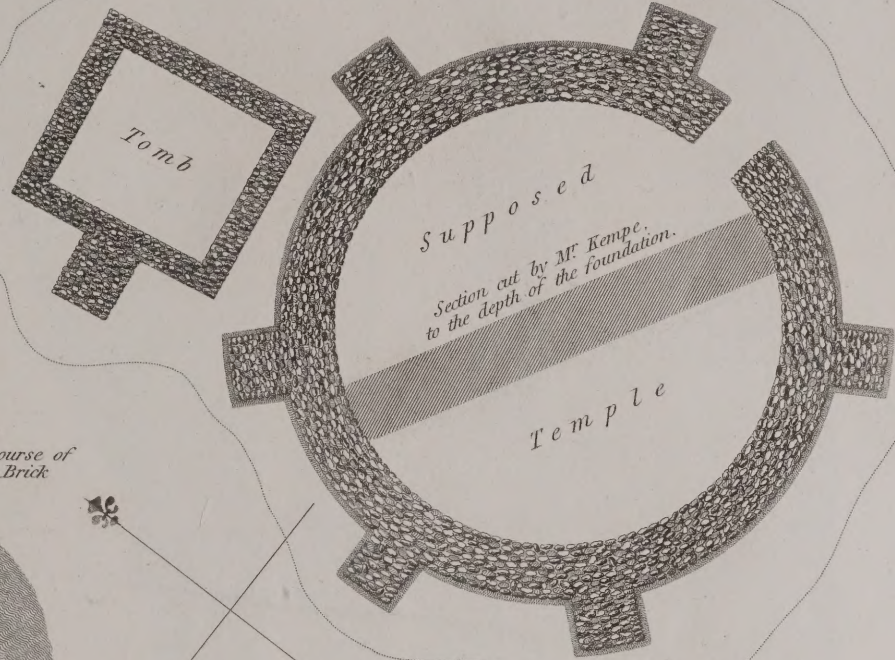
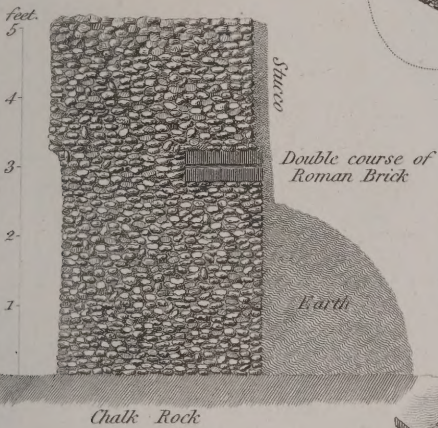
Grave in the Chalk Rock,
which contains the Coffin,
uncovered at Mr Croker's excavation.

Note.—The outer line, thus  represents the
coat of painted stucco. Thus  the flint walls
of the Building.

5 10 20 30 feet

Line of Mr Kemp's excavation.

Section of the Wall of the Temple.



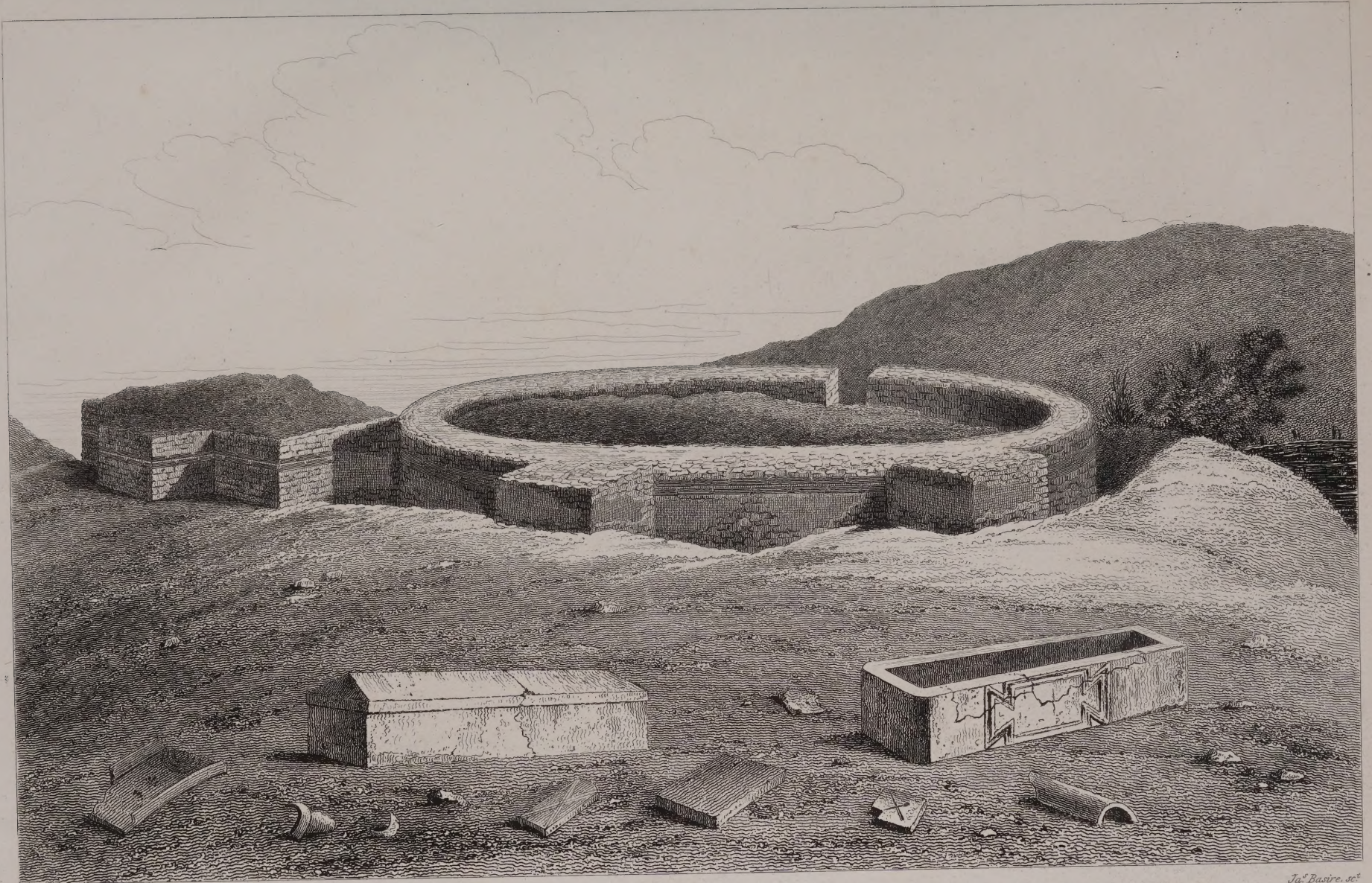
Chalk Rock



This field is covered with
numerous fragments of Roman
Tile and Pottery.

Foundations of
Buildings are extant
in this field.

Plan of the Roman Antiquities discovered at Keston 1828, and of the Site adjacent.



A. J. Kempe. del.

J. A. Basire. sc.

Ruins of a supposed Roman Temple, adjacent Tomb, Sarcophagi &c. found at War Bank, Keston, Kent. Sept. 1828.

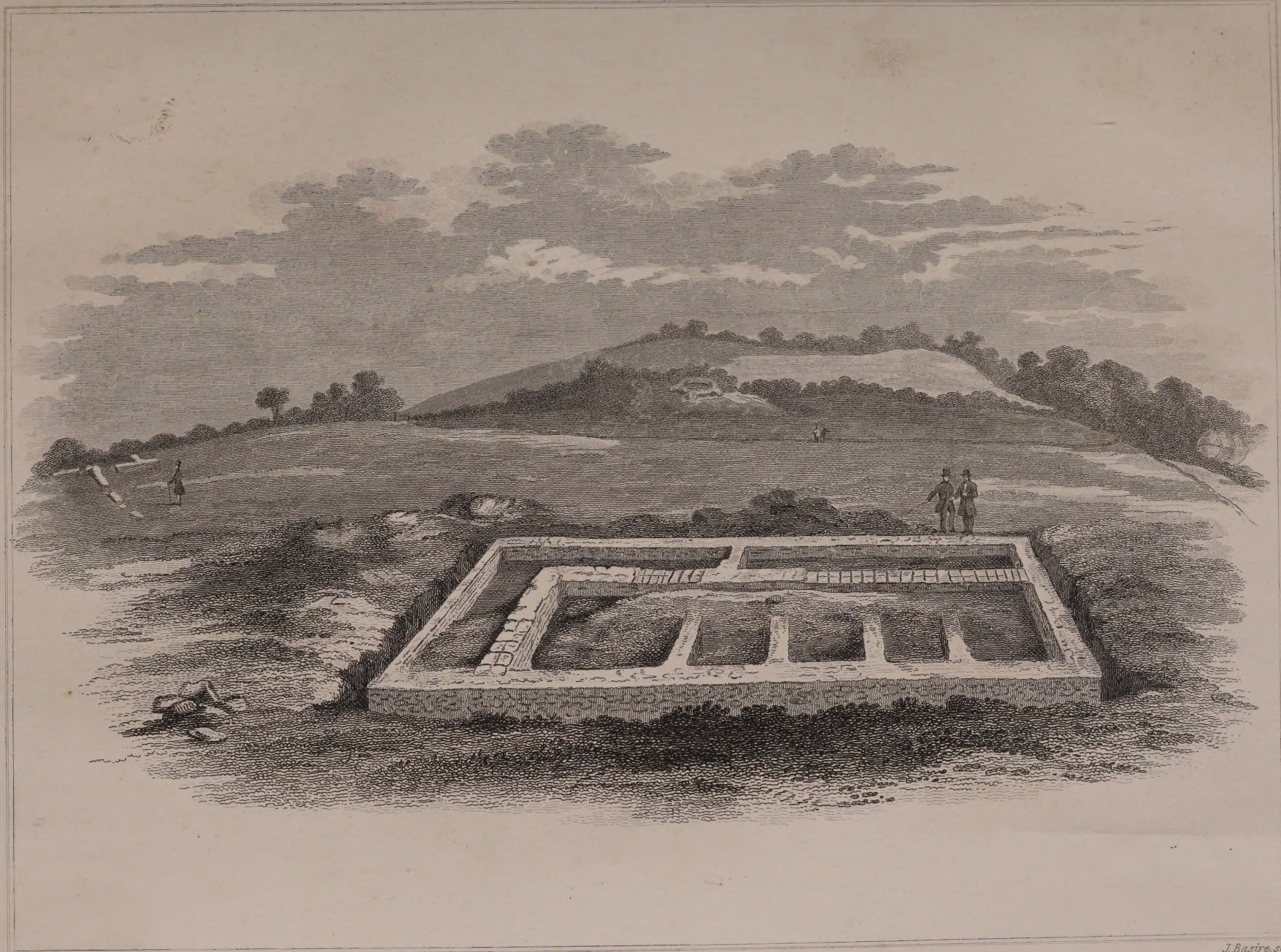
SUBSEQUENTLY to the Communication of the preceding Memoir by Mr. Kempe, Thomas Crofton Croker, Esq. exhibited to the Society, January 29th, 1829, Drawings of the various Fragments of Urns and other Pottery, found by himself and his friend Mr. Balmanno (who obligingly aided him) in the first excavation at War-bank. The Drawings were by William Henry Brooke, Esq. Fellow of the Society. Upwards of a hundred pieces of Pottery appear to have been collected at this time.

The Fragment of a border pattern in Fresco painting, found near the Circular Building, from which it was doubtless thrown out, alluded to in Mr. Kempe's Memoir, was probably the most interesting relic. A representation of it, with the colours heraldically designated, is here preserved.



Plan of
UPPER AND LOWER Warbank Fields
AND OTHERS
ON KESTON COURT FARM,
KENT;
shewing the Site of Roman Foundations
DISCOVERED OCTOBER, 1854.





F.W. Fairholt, F.S.A. del.

J. Basire, sc.

REMAINS OF THE ROMAN VILLA FOUND AT KESTON.

Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London, 23rd April 1855.

XIV. *An Account of Excavations on the Site of Roman Buildings at Keston, near Bromley, Kent: in a Letter to Rear-Admiral W. H. SMYTH, F.R.S., V.P. By GEORGE R. CORNER, Esq., F.S.A.*

Read November 30, 1854.

3, Paragon, New Kent Road,
27 November, 1854.

DEAR SIR,

In the twenty-second volume of *Archæologia*, Mr. A. J. Kempe has given an account of some then recent discoveries, by himself and Mr. Thomas Crofton Croker, near the ancient entrenchment called Cæsar's Camp, at Holwood Hill, Keston, near Bromley, Kent. Those discoveries consisted of the foundation of a circular Roman building, supposed to be a temple or tomb, with a square tomb, and two graves, in one of which was a stone coffin, and from the other a stone coffin had been several years previously removed to Wickham Court.

The foundations described by Mr. Kempe are situate in a field on Keston Court Farm, the property of the Rev. Sir Charles Francis Farnaby, Bart., of Wickham Court, which field bears the significant name of the Lower War Bank, being situate on a bold declivity, the upper part of which is called the Upper War Bank—a name which Mr. Kempe observes seems to denote “some scathe or havoc done within its limits.” He remarks that two or three fields about the spot are full of the vestigia of human residence—tiles, scored bricks, pottery, the bones of men and animals: and he goes on to say, “it may be no violent stretch of fancy to suppose that the town here, abandoned by the Romans, was destroyed in the wars between the Saxons and Britons; and that in the name War Bank,^a or the Hill of Battle, we have the brief record of a sanguinary conflict.” Mr. Kempe tells us, “it has constantly been the current tradition of the neighbourhood, that about this spot was a large town,” and he says “I have always indeed suspected that this beautiful little valley south-west of Holwood Hill was the site of a Roman colony, and that the entrenchments on the northern side of that eminence might be the *Castrum Æstivum*, and retiring citadel, of the Roman forces stationed here. The cultivators of Keston Court Farm had uniformly asserted the existence of old

^a More likely Weard or Ward Bank. Here was probably the weard setle (watch seat, settle, bench, or bank) mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon charter referred to at p. 125; and, as one of the significations of weard setle is a watch tower (Bosworth's A.-S. Dictionary), I should be inclined to suppose that the foundation of the circular building described by Mr. Kempe was that of a watch tower, but that its situation so far down the Bank does not seem to favour that conjecture.



foundations, scattered over the whole extent of War Bank Field and the two fields contiguous on either hand :” and Mr. Kempe discovered “ masses of ruinous walls, and especially near the hedge, the foundation wall of a Roman building, two feet and a half in breadth, and thirty feet long, with two projecting walls about a foot asunder, on the north side (probably the walls of a flue), which ran under the hedge.” But Mr. Kempe could not pursue this interesting part of his inquiry as far as he wished, the field being sowed for a crop of wheat as soon as ploughed.

Having obtained the permission of Sir Charles Francis Farnaby, and Mr. Abraham Smith, his tenant of Keston Court Farm, to make some further researches on this spot, I have this autumn, in company with Robert Lemon, Esq. F.S.A., John Richards, Esq. F.S.A., and other Fellows of our Society, been enabled to lay open some foundations of buildings in the Lower War Bank Field and the field adjoining, now known as the Eight Acres; and I have the honour to request you will lay before the Society of Antiquaries the result of our discoveries, which, without entering into the long-disputed question of the site of Noviomagus, at least prove that the remains of Roman buildings of considerable extent lie buried under the surface of two arable fields at Keston, the tracing of which, although only commenced, cannot, I think, but prove a work highly interesting to the Society.

We commenced our labours on Thursday, the 12th of October, and proceeded for three days of that week and four days of the week following, having, during the latter period, the kind and valuable assistance of John Yonge Akerman, Esq. F.S.A., Secretary of this Society.

We first opened the foundations denoted by Mr. Kempe on the plan accompanying his paper, near to the hedge which divides the Lower War Bank Field from the Eight Acres, and we found there the foundation of a wall composed of flints (the building material of the country) strongly set in mortar, but without tiles. This wall was about three feet thick and twenty-eight feet long, bearing north-east and south-west; and on the north-west side was a wall projecting from it at right angles, north-westward, and extending under the hedge into the adjoining field. This was evidently the foundation alluded to by Mr. Kempe.

Eighteen feet south-west from the end of this wall, we came upon another, at right angles to it, towards the south-east. This wall was of similar construction, but four feet thick, and twelve feet in length. Beyond this, towards the south-east, lay three detached portions of wall, one of which appeared to have slipped from its original position, and with the two other detached portions seemed to have formed a slight curve towards the east.

On the north side of this wall, and not far from the hedge, we discovered part of a pavement of flints laid on cement; the portion we laid open was about six or seven feet square: near it was a recess in the wall, which I could not but think looked as if intended for a gate. This wall also goes through the hedge into the Eight Acre Field. On the south-west side, at the end of the wall near to the hedge, we found a narrow opening or cavity in the wall, like a grave, but very small, being only three feet in length by one foot wide. South-eastward from this we came to a floor of concrete in the line of the first-mentioned wall, and occupying about six feet of it, beyond which the wall was traced about eighteen feet further south-westward, making the whole length of that wall, if it were continuous, about seventy-eight feet.

All these walls were within two feet from the surface of the ground, and communicated with other foundations in the Eight Acre Field adjoining; but about two years since, Mr. Smith, the farmer, grubbed up a narrow shaw which extended along the hedge, and took the opportunity of removing the foundations which were met with, out of the ground.

We however discovered in the Eight Acre Field, at a distance of about twelve feet from the hedge, the foundations of two parallel walls, extending at right angles to the principal wall in the War Bank Field; and, from the information we obtained through the labourers who had been employed by Mr. Smith to remove the foundations, I have been enabled to mark their position on the accompanying plan, by dotted lines, the foundations which we actually opened being shaded. I am inclined to think that these foundations formed part of an edifice of a public character, but further researches may afford better grounds than now are apparent for forming an opinion as to its use.

We were induced to leave for a time this portion of the field, in order to explore another part, where the farmer informed us his corn was thinner, and always turned yellow before other parts of the produce of the same field, and where the plough was most frequently obstructed by obdurate substances beneath the surface of the ground.

The point indicated by Mr. Smith was about a hundred feet south from the other foundations, and nearer to the middle of the Lower War Bank Field. Here we came, at about eighteen inches only below the surface, to the foundation of a wall running in a direction north-west and south-east, and which we opened for a length of forty-nine feet, together with a wall extending at a right angle from it at the north-west end, for a length of twelve feet six inches. These walls were two feet thick, and at the highest about four feet from the foundation. They were composed of flints and mortar, with a single course of Roman bonding-tiles,

laid along the whole length of the wall, upon a foundation of about six inches of flint-work, resting on the chalk; the superstructure above the tiles being composed of flint work, except that at the angle formed by the two walls, seven inches above the long course of tiles, there were two layers of tiles as a quoin.

The bonding-tiles were eleven inches wide, and had been sixteen inches long; but, as the thickness of the wall required more than one tile, and the length of two would have been too much, they were all broken at the side where they met in the centre of the wall.

We traced and laid open these walls and other foundations connected with them, until we developed what appears to be the almost complete foundation of a small Roman villa, being sixty feet six inches in length, by thirty-two feet eight inches in width; of which, as well as the foundations first mentioned, I submit a plan.

We were not fortunate enough to meet with anything like a tessellated pavement; but, as Mr. Kempe found in the temple or tomb, whatever flooring the buildings may have had seemed to have been completely destroyed; nor did we find any inscribed stone, nor even a potter's mark, nor any sculptured or carved stone of any kind: the only coin found was a small brass one of Valens; but Mr. Smith of Keston Court Farm has in his possession a few Roman coins which have been found on this spot: viz.

1. Clodius Albinus. Second-brass. Legend, *SAECVLI FRVGIFERO COS II.* Genius standing. A scarce type. (See Mr. Akerman's Descriptive Catalogue.)
2. Carausius. Third-brass. *PAX AVG.* Peace standing. (Two coins.)
3. Allectus. Third-brass. Galley type. Legend obliterated.
4. Claudius Gothicus. Third-brass. *AEQVITAS AVG.* Equity standing.
5. Victorinus? Much defaced.
6. Constantinus Magnus. Second-brass. *SOLI INVICTO COMITI.* In the exergue *PLN.*
7. Ditto. Third-brass. The labarum between two soldiers. Legend left out from want of metal.

The ground however was full of fragments of Roman tiles of all sorts, as ridge-tiles, flue-tiles, and drain-tiles, some of them ornamented with various patterns. Numerous fragments of pottery, chiefly of black or dark grey earth, and some, but not much, of Samian ware, and that unornamented; perhaps the most remarkable was part of a colander of Samian ware. Some of the coarser pottery was studded on the inside with small silicious particles, as mentioned by Mr. Kempe, and we found also many pieces of stucco covered with a red pigment similar to that described by him as having covered the exterior of the circular building.

Indications of the action of fire were frequently apparent, and pieces of charcoal and scorix of iron and copper were found.

We found also bones and horns of animals and tusks of hogs, but no bones that we could recognise as having belonged to the human species.

Of metal substances, we found nails, a knife, and a thin flat piece of iron in shape of a crescent or gorget.

It was getting too late in the season to prosecute these researches any further this year, but I venture to express a hope that after harvest in the ensuing year further excavations may be made in these fields, which will doubtless lead to the discovery of other remains of the ancient state of this place, which appears to have realised the denunciations of Jeremiah and Micah against Zion—that they should be ploughed as a field.

I am indebted to my friend F. W. Fairholt, Esq. F.S.A., for a very faithful sketch of the scene of these discoveries, including the temple or tomb described by Mr. Kempe and the Upper War Bank Field, and shewing the position of the present discoveries with respect to those of Mr. Croker and Mr. Kempe.

I must not omit to mention, that in a field at a short distance from Keston Court Farm, near Baston Court, an ancient manorial residence in Hayes, now the property of James Thomas Fry, Esq. Master of the Reports and Entries in Chancery, there exist, about four feet below the surface, the foundations of a building which we found by probing the ground, having had the spot pointed out to us by an old inhabitant of the place; but we were obliged to defer further research until some future period.

The name of this place, Keston, has a very significant reference to the sepulchral remains which have been found here.

This name is not, as Hasted supposes, derived from the Camp at Holwood Hill, quasi “Casterton,” nor is it, as the same author observes, from Cæsar’s or Kæsar’s Town, according to the fancy of some ingenious etymologists; but I believe I have found the true derivation of the name in some Anglo-Saxon charters, the first of which is one of Æthelberht, King of Wessex, dated A.D. 862, whereby he gave and granted to Dryghtwald his minister ten carucates of land in a place called Bromleag, and the boundaries of the grant are thus described:

“Sunt etenim termini p̃dicti agelli circūjacentia. An norðan frā Ceddanleage to Langanleage,^b Bromleaginga Mearc^c 7 Liofshema.^d 8anne fram Langanleage to

^a Ceddanleage I take to be Kengley Bridge, at Southend, on the road from Lewisham to Bromley.

^b Langanleage—Langley in Beckenham.

^c Bromley Mark.

^d Lewisham.

ðam Wōnstocce.^e ðanne fram ðam Wōnstocce, be Modingahema Mearce,^f to Cinta Stiogole.^g ðanne fram Cinta Stiogole, be Modingahema Mearce, to Earnes beame.^h ðanne fram Earnes beame Cregsetna hagaⁱ an east halfe, sced hit to Liowsandene.^j ðanne fram Liowsandene to Swelgende.^k ðanne fram Swelgende, Cregsetna haga to Sioxslihtre.^l ðanne fram Sioxslihtre to Fearnbiorginga Mearce.^m Fearnbiorgingⁿ Mearce, hit sced to Cyṣtaninga Mearce,ⁿ Cystanunga Mearc, hit sced suðan to Weardsetle,^o ðanne fram Weardsetle, Cyṣtaninga Mearc to Wichæma Mearce. ðanne sio West Mearc,^q be Wichæma Mearce, ut to Bipplestyde.^r ðanne fram Bipplestyde to Acustyde,^s to Biohahema Mearse,^t fram Acustyde to Ceddanleage ðanne belimpoð ðer to ðam londe fif denn^u au uhvalda Broccesham ðesdennes nama ðes oðres dennes nama' sænget hryg' billan ora is ðes ðriddan nama ðanne hoa denn in gleppan felda."

There are two other Anglo-Saxon charters, being grants of this land of Bromley, the one by Ædgar, King of the English and other people, in 966, to St. Andrew, and Ælfstan prior of the Church of Rochester; and the other by Ædeldred, in 987, to Aðelsige, his faithful minister; in both of which the boundaries are nearly similarly described as in the charter of Æthelberht which I have

^e The Wonstock, a fixed post or stulp, possibly at Stumps Hill, between Southend and Beckenham. Mr. Kemble conjectures that this word may have some reference to Wodin.

^f Mottingham Mark.

^g Cinta Stiogole, or Kent Style, I take to be Kent Gate, on the boundary of the county between Wickham and Addington.

^h Earnes beame signifies the Eagles Home or Tree, but Mr. Kemble supposes the Earnes beame to be a tree marked with the figure of an eagle, not a tree in which the eagle built.

ⁱ The hedge or boundary of the settlers on the Crecca or River Cray.

^j Perhaps Leaves Green, Bromley Common.

^k Swelgende. The Swallow or Gulph.

^l Query, Six Slaughters or Murders.

^m Farnborough Mark.

ⁿ Keston Mark, still known by that name.

^o The Watch Seat or Station, being south from Keston Mark, was most probably the Weard, Ward, or Watch Bank, now called "The War Bank," the situation of which with respect to Keston Mark corresponds with the Charter.

^p Wickham Mark.

^q Perhaps Westmore Green.

^r Bipplestyde is probably Beddlestead in Surrey, on the border of Kent.

^s I do not know where this place can be; there is a farm called Lustead near Westmore Green.

^t Biohahema might mean the Bee inclosure or Apiary.

^u A denne was a certain allotment of woodland in the weald.

quoted; and in all of them Cystaning Mearce is one of the boundaries. This name of Cystaning seem to be composed of cyst, "a chest or coffin," stane, "stone," and ing, "a field." It would thus mean, "The Field of Stone Coffins," a name singularly applicable to a spot where sepulchral remains, including stone coffins of a date anterior to the Anglo-Saxon name of the place, have been found at so recent a period.

The conversion of Cystaning into Keston is elucidated by Domesday Book, in which the place is called "Chestan." The "ch" being pronounced hard gives the modern name of the place.

The word "mearce," so frequently mentioned in the description of the boundary of the above mentioned grant, seems to require some notice: its obvious signification is "a boundary," but it is to be observed that the Anglo-Saxon tribes appear to have had as a boundary between each other a district of waste or uninclosed and uncultivated land, as in the Marches of Wales, called "marks," with which some sacred or superstitious ideas were connected. My friend Mr. Akerman has directed my attention to a passage in Kemble's Saxons in England, illustrative of this peculiarity,^a and we may suppose that some superstition

^a It is as follows:—"Let us first take into consideration the Mark in its restricted and proper sense of a boundary. Its most general characteristic is, that it should not be distributed in arable, but remain in heath, forest, fen and pasture. In it the Markmen—called in Germany, Markgenossen, and perhaps by the Anglo-Saxons Mearcgenéatas—had commonable rights; but there could be no private estate in it, no lúd or hlot, κληρος or *haeredium*. Even if under peculiar circumstances any markman obtained a right to essart or clear a portion of the forest, the portion so subjected to the immediate law of property ceased to be mark. It was undoubtedly under the protection of the gods; and it is probable that within its woods were those sacred shades especially consecrated to the habitation and service of the deity.

"If the nature of an early Teutonic settlement, which has nothing in common with a city, be duly considered, there will appear an obvious necessity for the existence of a mark, and for its being maintained inviolate. Every community, not sheltered by walls, or the still firmer defences of public law, must have one, to separate it from neighbours, and protect it from rivals: it is like the outer pulp that surrounds and defends the kernel. No matter how small or how large the community—it may be only a village, even a single household, or a whole state—it will still have a mark, a space, or boundary, by which its own rights of jurisdiction are limited, and the encroachments of others are kept off. The more extensive the community which is interested in the mark, the more solemn and sacred the formalities by which it is consecrated and defended; but even the boundary of the private man's estate is under the protection of the gods and of the law. 'Accursed,' in all ages and all legislations, 'is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. Even the owner of a private estate is not allowed to build or cultivate to the extremity of his own possession, but must leave a space for eaves. Nor is the general rule abrogated by changes in the original compass of the communities; as smaller districts coalesce and become, as it were, compressed into one body, the smaller and original marks may become obliterated and converted merely into commons, but the public mark will have been increased upon the new and extended frontier. Villages tenanted by Hearingas or

prevailed in the neighbourhood respecting Keston Mark (which is situate between Holwood Hill and the high road from Bromley to Farnborough, and was until a recent period an open common), from the fact that in the church, the communion table of oak is inlaid with a device formed of different woods, in the form of a cross *bottonée*; underneath which is written "The Keston Mark," and "In hoc signo vinces."

The table is of the seventeenth century, and the device upon it seems to indicate that the clergy of that day sought to divert the thoughts of the people from a superstitious notion about the Keston Mark, to the Christian mark of the Cross.

Mr. Akerman suggests that this cross is a *reproduction of a very early cross* set up on the establishment of Christianity in this part of England, the earliest

Módingas may cease to be separated, but the larger divisions which have grown up by their union—Meanwaras, Mægsetan, or Hwiccas will still have a boundary of their own; these again may be lost in the extending circuit of Wessex or Mercia; till, a yet greater obliteration of the marks having been produced through increasing population, internal conquest, or the ravages of foreign invaders, the great kingdom of England at length arises, having wood and desolate moorland or mountain as its mark against Scots, Cumbrians, and Britons, and the eternal sea itself as a bulwark against Frankish and Frisian pirates.

"But, although the mark is waste, it is yet the property of the community: it belongs to the freemen as a whole, not as a partible possession: it may as little be profaned by the stranger, as the arable land itself which it defends. It is under the safeguard of the public law long after it has ceased to be under the immediate protection of the gods: it is unsafe, full of danger; death lurks in its shades and awaits the incautious or hostile visitant:

all the markland was
with death surrounded,
the snares of the foe:

punishments of the most frightful character are denounced against him who violates it; and though, in historical times, these can only be looked upon as comminatory and symbolical, it is very possible that they may be the records of savage sacrifices believed due, and even offered, to the gods of the violated sanctuary. I can well believe that we, too, had once our Diana Taurica. The marks are called accursed; that is, accursed to man, accursed to him that does not respect their sanctity; but they are sacred, for on their maintenance depend the safety of the community, and the service of the deities whom that community honours. And even when the gods have abdicated their ancient power, even to the very last, the terrors of superstition come in aid of the enactments of law; the deep forests and marshes are the abodes of monsters and dragons; wood-spirits bewilder and decoy the wanderer to destruction: the Nicors house at the side of lakes and marshes: Grendel, the man-eater, is a 'mighty stepper over the mark;' the chosen home of the fire-drake is a fen.

"The natural tendency, however, of this state of isolation is to give way; population is an ever-active element of social well-being: and when once the surface of a country has become thickly studded with communities settled between the marks, and daily finding the several clearings grow less and less sufficient for their support, the next step is the destruction of the marks themselves, and the union of the settlers in larger bodies, and under altered circumstances."—Kemble's *Saxons in England*, vol. i. book i. ch. 2.—"The Mark."

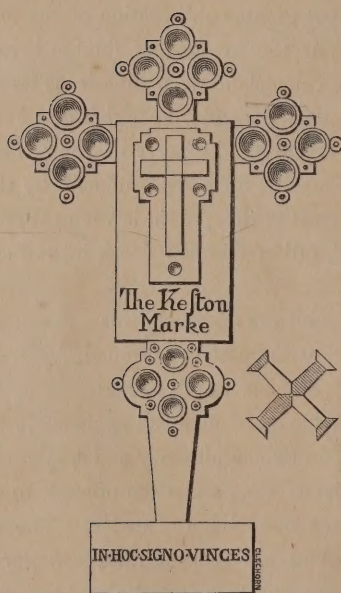
portion of the island converted, and he observes: "This seems the more probable from the circumstance of the Marc containing the cwealm-štow, or place of execution, where criminals were sacrificed, as Kemble shows in the note cited."

I send you a drawing by Mr. Fairholt of the cross on the communion table, in illustration of this remark, and I beg to refer to Mr. Kemble's observations on the Anglo-Saxon mearge in further illustration of the curious details of Æthelberht's grant.

I have the honour to be, dear Sir,

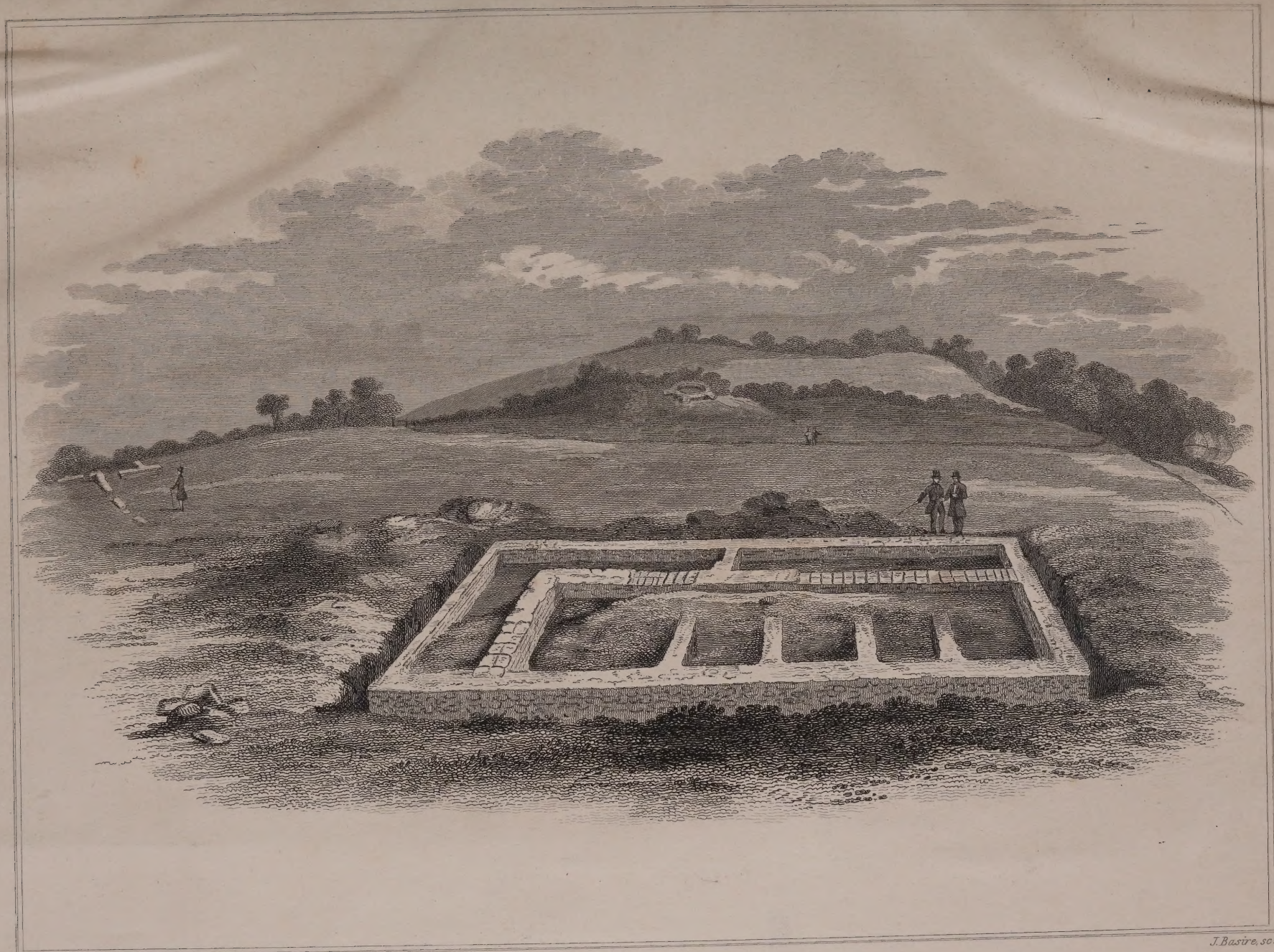
Your very faithful servant,

GEO. R. CORNER.



Plan of
UPPER AND LOWER WARBANK FIELDS
AND OTHERS
ON KESTON COURT FARM,
KENT;
shewing the Site of Roman Foundations
DISCOVERED OCTOBER, 1854





F.W. Fairholt, F.S.A. del.

J. Basire, sc.

REMAINS OF THE ROMAN VILLA FOUND AT KESTON.

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